

England — Churches, &c. —
Baptists

CIRCULAR LETTER.

— Midland Assoc.

THE ELDERS and MESSENGERS OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES,

MEETING FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AT

Bond-street,
Cannon-street, }

Birmingham,

Bewdley

Brittlelane,

Bromsgrove,

Coppice,

Cosely,

Dudley,

Evesham,

Leominster,

Perthore,

Shiffnal,

Shrewsbury,

Willenhall,

Wolverhampton.

Worcester,

Having also received LETTERS from
Ryeford,
Tewkesbury, and
Upton.

BEING MET IN ASSOCIATION AT
WOLVERHAMPTON,

May the 14 and 15, 1799.

Maintaining the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Godhead;—eternal and personal Election;—original Sin;—particular Redemption;—free Justification by the Righteousness of Christ imputed;—efficacious Grace in Regeneration;—the final Perseverance of the Saints;—the Resurrection of the Dead;—the general Judgment at the last Day;—the Life everlasting;—and the independence of all their respective Churches

To the Members of the several Churches they represent, send
Christian Salutation.

CIRCULAR LETTER.



DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

IT is with the most refined pleasure that we once more present you with the annual token of our affectionate christian regard; we last year addressed you upon sundry important duties of Religion, and we hope that our advice had due influence upon you, both as churches and as individuals; yet, being conscious, brethren, that the wisest counsels can never take due effect, unless, they are attended with daily divine influence; we have thought it meet, this year, to call your attention to that most important of all subjects, namely, **COMMUNION WITH GOD**. Notwithstanding that Adam was driven out of the garden for his transgression, and made a fugitive from the divine presence; yet, eternal thanks to our gracious God! he hath devised a way, in which he can, consistently with all the glorious perfections of his nature, hold **CONVERSE** with the sinful sons of men.

It must be admitted, as a self evident truth, that an absolute God can have no fellowship with any order of sinful beings, for this would be an *eternal stain* upon the character of the God of purity: but, when we consider that his coequal and coeternal Son hath appeared in our world, and, that by his personal obedience he hath magnified the Law—taken all the guilt of God's elect upon himself—borne our iniquities upon the accursed tree—satisfied every demand of divine justice—spoiled the principalities and powers of Hell—obtained the promise of the Father—in a word, made a compleat provision for the present salvation, and final glorification of all the family of God: these things considered, we are no longer at a loss to know, how God can, does, and will, in very deed, dwell with men on the earth; yea, even
with

with the rebellious also. It is upon this great and everlasting foundation, that he dwells in Sion; walks amidst the golden candlesticks; is in the midst of his people, though but two or three in number; and hath promised to be with them always, even to the end of the world.

COMMUNION with God is the greatest of all blessings on this side glory, it is next of kin to Heaven; it is no other than the soul's familiar converse with Deity, into whose presence as into the holiest of all, the Believer has access through the vail of Christ's flesh; here the soul unbosoms its whole self—pours out its cries, complaints, and praises; and in return gratefully receives Jehovah's smiles, a sense of his love, and a suitable supply of its wants.

LET men of atheistic principles treat this affair with banter if they chuse; the man of God who enjoys it, has bread to eat which the world knows not of. O the sweets of Communion with God! how much of his glory is seen! and of the glory of the invisible world! 'tis a little heaven upon earth! but not a lasting one; being often interrupted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Great however and inestimable as this privilege is, we fear, notwithstanding the increasing number of professors of religion, there are but few, who are indeed convinced of the importance of it; and fewer still who seek it in a becoming manner; the unprofitable lives of many who bear the christian name, too loudly demonstrate that they do not enjoy Communion with the Father of Spirits; it is not, even, to be imagined, that the proud, worldly minded, slanderous, unclean, profane, frothy, malicious, disorderly professor, enjoys this invaluable blessing.

PERMIT us then, Brethren, as we have your everlasting interest at heart; to call upon you to seek after Communion with God. Would you walk in the light as he is in the light, then

1 We exhort you to be aware of the world—its company—conformity to it—the love of it—for if any man love the world, so as to draw away his heart from God, or duty, or to give it God's place in his affections, the love of the Father is not in him.

2. We advise you to be aware of sin, abstain from all appearance of evil; remember, you cannot enjoy Beelzebub the God of Ekron, and the God of Israel too—he whose name is Jealous, is a Jealous God; there is no dividing of matters between God, and your own lusts—the rebellious dwell in a dry place—yes, this is their lot, whatsoever their station may be in the world, or in the church, ministers not excepted.

3. Deal closely with the Lord in the closet, content not yourselves with saying your prayers, but wrestle as Jacob did, saying I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Now mark the *hand* of God with you, when you are led thus to deal with him, he is nigh unto that soul, whatever may be its case, it shall have either deliverance from, or support under, its trials. Prayer is that great *ordinance* or duty in which the soul holds a more direct fellowship with God, than in any other institution of divine appointment—but

4. We would have you search the scriptures—be watchful and regular in all the duties God has commanded, ever abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

In order that you may be stirred up to seek after a daily intercourse with God, we would point you to some of its advantages; it is of the utmost importance in every relative station, and in all the departments of life: are we ministers? this will make our ministrations like a burning coal from the altar of God; are we masters? it will put us in remembrance that our master is in Heaven; as servants it will make us faithful in all things; as husbands and wives, parents and children it will sweetly provoke us to love and good works.

In Communion with God, lies the very essence of that godliness which is profitable to all things, and which has the promise of both worlds ; how fortified is the soul that walks with God, against all the changing scenes of life! prosperous or adverse. In prosperity, this will make us thankful, in adversity, we shall say, He hath done all things well. Communion with God will lift our hearts above the world. What a poor trifle this world appears, whenever the soul enjoys a glance of God! The nearer a soul approaches unto God, the deeper will its abasement be. Oh! what abundant humility, solid peace, unutterable gratitude, unfeigned love, burning zeal, hatred of all sin, and ardent longings after the immortal regions, will Communion with God inspire. The persons who enjoy it, are indeed the salt of the earth; their deportment declares that they have been with Jesus.

We conclude by affectionately desiring, that we all may be more earnestly concerned to seek after these delightful streams, until we are brought to drink at the great fountain-head of eternal pleasure.

Signed by the Moderator,

THOMAS SMITH.

B R E V I A T E S.

TUESDAY EVENING (VI.)

Brother *Bissell*, of *Cosely*, prayed; Brother *Smith* of *Cosely*, was chosen Moderator—and as Brother *Pearce*, particularly desired that a new Treasurer may be nominated, the Moderator was also elected Treasurer for the Association Fund: The Letters from the Churches were then read, also one from the Church at *Broseley*, proposing an Union with the Association, which propos-

sal was chearfully admitted, and Brother *Newell*, of *Birmingham*, concluded the Service with prayer.—The Ministers and Messengers present being apprized of the indisposition of Brother *Pearce*, and that some alarming symptoms had lately appeared, agreed to meet at six o'Clock next Morning, to spend some time in prayer to God on his behalf.

WEDNESDAY MORNING (VI.)

Agreeable to last Night's resolution, many Ministers Messengers, and others, being met, Brethren *Scarrott*, of *Shiffnal*, *Edmonds*, of *Birmingham*, and *Berry*, of *Hanley-Green*, engaged in prayer, and a very solemn and affecting Season it proved, our hearts were in the most perfect Unison for the recovery of our much esteemed Friend, and Brother *Pearce*, whom we so greatly love in the Lord; may he be restored again in mercy, to the Church. Brother *Webster*, of *Broseley*, read the Circular Letter, which being approved was ordered to be printed, and the Moderator concluded the service with prayer. Met again at half past Ten. Brother *Rowland*, of *Perthore*, prayed; Brother *Belcher*, of *Worcester*, preached from Acts. XI. 20. 21. *Preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.* after singing Brother *Butterworth*, of *Evesham*, preached from Psal. L. 2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God hath shined.* And concluded in prayer.

In the Evening met at Six. Brother *Williams*, of *Bewdley*, prayed, Brother *Berry*, of *Hanley*, preached from 1. John I. 7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Brother *Palmer*, prayed and dismissed the assembly.

State

State of the Churches since the last Association.

INCREASE.		DECREASE.	
By Baptism	224	By Letters of Dismission	24
Letter	11	Exclusion	26
Experience	8	Death	16
Restored	1		
	<hr/> 244		<hr/> 66

Clear Increase this Year 178.

The Double Lectures to be observed for the Year ensuing as follows.

1. PERSHORE, August the 7th, 1799.
2. BILSTONE, September the 11th, 1799.
3. UPTON, sometime in April, 1800.

Agreed that some day in the first week in July, be observed as a day of Prayer and Humiliation, by all the Churches.

The next Association to be held at WORCESTER, on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Whitsun week; Brethren *Mason*, and *Pearce*, to preach; in case of failure, Brother *Rowland*.

Put up at the Unicorn Inn, Broad Street.

F I N I S

Joseph & Patrick's Book
1799.

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